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LETTER DATED 23 AUGUST 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Security Council resolution 986 (1995) and the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Iraq and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 May 1996 confirmed the exceptional and temporary nature of the oil-for-food programme which was intended to provide for the most urgent humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people who were subjected to collective punishment through the most vile regime of comprehensive sanctions in history.

Since work began on the programme, it has encountered major difficulties of implementation because of the complexity and slowness of its procedures, because of outside interference in its operation, and also because of the wide powers conferred on the 661 Committee whereby any member of the Committee is entitled to prevent agreement on contracts for humanitarian items for the most trivial of reasons, or even for no reason at all. Accordingly, the programme has not been able to achieve its minimum objectives because of the insufficiency and late arrival of humanitarian items procured under the programme, together with the continuous deterioration of economic and social structures in Iraq owing to the comprehensive sanctions which have prevented Iraq from investing its resources to rebuild its economic and social structures and to create employment opportunities for its people. The most recent proof of the worsening humanitarian situation in Iraq was the field statistical report published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concerning deaths among Iraqi children, published in July 1999, which stated that half a million Iraqi children under five years of age had died because of the sanctions.

In spite of the condemnation, outrage and criticism voiced by many States concerning the practices of the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the 661 Committee in putting contracts for humanitarian items on hold and concerning the interference of those two States in the work of the Office of the Iraq Programme, the two States concerned have not changed their conduct and have continued to put contracts on hold without justification and to exert pressure on the Iraq Programme in order to hinder the submission of contracts; on the

contrary, those practices have become more iniquitous with every phase. The final instance that can be cited as an example of the delay in submitting contracts, and putting them on hold, comes from phase V which ended three months ago, even though there were 548 Iraq Programme contracts either on hold or blocked to a value equal to $795 million, at a time when a sum of $650 million in cash was available in the account.

The table below shows the number of contracts blocked and put on hold, and the sums involved.

Sector	Contracts on hold		Programme contracts blocked	
	Number of contracts	Sum (million dollars)	Number of contracts	Sum (million dollars)
Health	36	45	62	96
Electricity	72	98	18	180
Education	21	14	28	21
Water and sewerage	13	41	21	36
Communications	4	60	2	33
Oil	168	83	103	88
Total	314	341	234	454

The practice of the United States and the United Kingdom in putting contracts on hold in the 661 Committee and in exerting pressure on the work of the Iraq Programme so as to delay the submission of contracts has reached such an extreme that it is impossible to pass it over in silence. To leave the matter as it is means permitting the United States and the United Kingdom to destroy the last remaining modicum of humanitarian content in the Programme, while the people of Iraq are exposed to the crime of genocide by reason of the comprehensive sanctions imposed on them and while, at the same time, the sums deducted are applied continuously and immediately to compensation, to the Special Commission, to the expenses of the Iraq Programme and to Security Council resolution 778 (1992).

In condemning and deploring the inhumane, illegal and immoral practices of the United States and the United Kingdom throughout the implementation phases of the Memorandum of Understanding, the Republic of Iraq calls on you, in your capacity as the sponsor of the Memorandum of Understanding, to intervene to put an end to these practices and to prevent harm being done to Iraq's basic interests and to prevent further damage being done to the credibility of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative